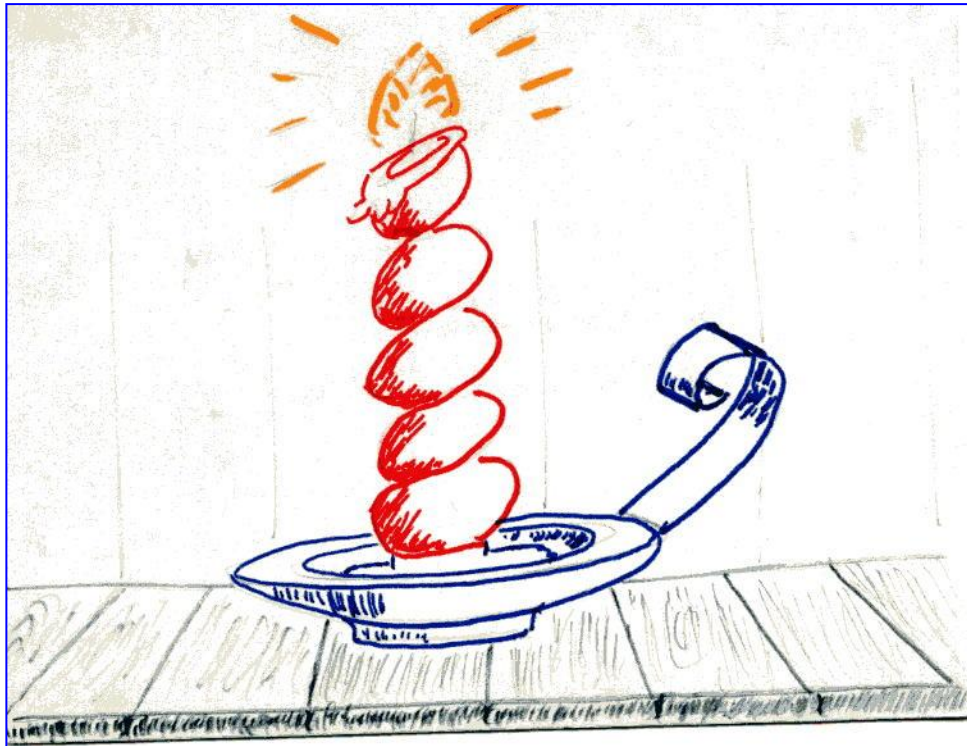


REMEMBERING HILDE

Dennis Johnson



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PREFACE

By Stephen Morrissey

I first met Hilde and Dennis Johnson in November 1991. At that time Hilde and Dennis were already elderly and living in a townhouse in the Vancouver suburb of Richmond, British Columbia.

This chapbook, a written memorial to Hilde, is compiled from letters Dennis wrote between 2000 and 2001. It is a testament of his love for his then-deceased wife and to the extraordinary person Hilda Mueller Johnson was. For me, it is also a memorial to a good friend, Dennis Johnson, who was a noble soul himself.

A brief note on both Hilde and Dennis is necessary. Hilde was born in Berlin, Germany, before World War One. Her first marriage, blessed by the birth of Hilde's only daughter, was otherwise turbulent and unhappy. Her second marriage, to Dennis Johnson, about eighteen years her junior, was a happy union that lasted over fifty years. They met just after World War Two when Dennis was a serviceman in Germany. Hilde, bringing her daughter with her, moved to England from Berlin to be with Dennis. Originally concerned that their son was seeing a much older woman, Dennis's parents were finally won over by Hilde. Frank Johnson was Hilde and Dennis's only child together. Their life was one of service to other people, spirituality, astrology, and travel.

Hilde was a gifted psychic and medium who influenced and changed many people's lives. Hilde's mother was an astrologer and her grandmother was a psychic with whom she was particularly close. Her grandmother introduced Tarot card reading to Hilde when she was still a young girl. Hilde's mediumistic and occult gifts were present for several generations in Hilde's maternal line, and have continued through subsequent generations.

During her life, to earn a living, Hilde worked as a milliner and Dennis owned a stationery business as well as investing in real estate. In her various shops in locations as diverse as England, North Vancouver, and San Diego, California Hilde met and counseled many individuals. She continued to counsel people, over the telephone, until the end of her life. Hilde died in her ninetieth year in 1999.

Dennis Johnson was an astrologer who also counseled many people during his life. Dennis kept an extensive correspondence with people and did spiritual writing. He often spoke of his early mentor and teacher, Dr. W.B. Crow. Dennis attended private classes once a week for five years

with Dr. Crow in order to learn astrology. In his old age, after Hilde's death, Dennis was left with his memories of Hilde. He never fully recovered from his grief over her death or his loneliness without her. To make matters worse, Dennis's health was never good and he was hospitalized several times due to Tuberculosis after Hilde was gone. He died in his mid-seventies in 2002.

While I knew Hilde and Dennis only in their old age, visiting them was always a special event. Their Richmond home was meticulously tidy and well kept; however, they made guests feel special and welcome. Conversation with them was lively and full of laughter. We often discussed astrology, health, the meaning of life, dreams, and their travel adventures. I will never forget sitting with Hilde on their living room couch after a late lunch with them, and Hilde gesturing to put my feet up on the couch and rest, by putting her feet on the couch. When she couldn't express adequately herself in English, she would gesture, make faces, and exclaim some phrase in her native German. Hilde had charisma that naturally attracted people to her. She had a terrific sense of humour and a great love for others.

It was a privilege to have met and known both Hilde and Dennis. After knowing Hilde it is easy to see why Dennis adored her so much. Hilde and Dennis were people who combined the spiritual life with the practical life of work, travel, and family. Carolyn Zonailo has written "The Turtle Poems", in loving appreciation of Hilde and Dennis after knowing them for close to thirty years. These poems can be found at the end of this chapbook. Now I offer to you a glimpse into the story of Hilde and Dennis, in the words of Dennis Johnson. Please join me in "remembering Hilde".

Stephen Morrissey
Montreal, Canada
September 2004

To Hilde

Alone, lost and nowhere to go.
The clouds around were dark as night
But the sun was burning bright,
so bright that the tears began to flow.
It was then that I saw your rainbow.

I followed it to its very end.
T'was truly a Godsend.
I had found you, that part I had lost.
Together to share forever,
Two souls upon the way at last.

Dennis Johnson

REMEMBERING HILDE

By Dennis Johnson

When I met Hilde at 21, I knew little about anything of depth, except something of yoga and spiritualism through my years in the army, although I had taken a course on philosophy and studied a special book, *Cosmos, Man & Society*.

Through Hilde an enormous opening occurred for me. I felt as though I knew very very little at all. Hilde and I were brought back to Christianity when we both met an elderly woman here. Through a friend we were asked if we would do a few errands for this lady whilst our friend was away for a few weeks. We were amazed at this saint-like lady. It was partly through her that Hilde received the connection for the spiritual writings. I remember one day after being with this person, that as we traveled home, Hilde had an awareness of a powerful huge entity accompanying us. This entity stayed with Hilde for over two days. Consequently, it was as if Hilde reached a different level.

She did read Krishnamurti and had his tapes. Through Dr. Crow, whom we also wouldn't have met had it not been for Hilde's connections in Berlin, we made excellent acquaintances in the Theosophical Society, both with the Blavatsky people and Besant ones. Both had totally different approaches, the former being mostly study groups, whereas the Besant people were mostly outgoing. To Krishnamurti's credit, he didn't want to be made a messiah.

When we arrived in Canada we were met by the president of the society in Canada, who lived in Kitchener, and he in turn phoned New York and had Hilde speak to the head of the organisation in New York. The local head of the society made quite a fuss of Hilde, when we arrived in Vancouver in 1953, and when Hilde became very ill, this lady couldn't do enough for Hilde, realising how special she was.

I have a very good friend here in B.C. who was and still is high up on the political ladder as an advisor and writer for various governments, and this is also due to Hilde.

About 47 years ago, shortly after arriving in Vancouver, we met his mother. She was the best friend that Hilde had up until her death at 96, six or seven years ago. Hilde had a millinery salon in West Van, and Gladys was a customer, and it was instant rapport between the two of them. Gladys had no ego at all. She would share her last piece of bread.

This is something that Hilda really did do during the 2nd World War. Food was scarce, there was little or no electricity or water and the city was burning day after day. A dying woman needed some sustenance to survive and Hilde helped her. However, Hilde helped so many during the war, putting her own life on the line.

After the war Hilde worked without pay for the housing department in Berlin, getting bombed out people shelter off the streets. Later she was commended by Reuter, the Mayor of Berlin, and has a letter from the Minister of Urban affairs. Regarding the senior center here in Richmond, Hilde had me join it about twenty years ago, and that was when I took up Tai chi. Prior

to that both Hilde and I were members of Brock House, the most prominent senior center in Vancouver. Hilde made so many friends there. It was as though almost everyone she touched became a friend. I lacked that complete openness. But I have learnt quite a bit from Hilde. However, I have lots, lots still to learn. It was for me the most wonderful day in my life when I met her, pure bliss.

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The apartment building in Berlin where Hilde lived was the only one left standing in the whole street after the bombing. She had many wonderful friends there mostly in the world of music, writing and the arts, because she had been accepted as a life member of the Society of Culture, which was no small accomplishment. Not like in North America, there in Berlin one had to present a number of creations. Amongst these friends were a famous conductor and the most prominent Egyptologist who spent hours with us, telling of his findings in Egypt and his special relationship with King Farouk. Through his recommendation, I was able to get one of the few copies of *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* which went on sale at the bookshop next to the British Museum.

On the boat from Holland to Britain, when she was coming to join me, she entertained the passengers and crew and made the acquaintance of a Latvian princess, who was also joining her fiancé, and the four of us became instant friends. He was Lord Lindsay, was in the Foreign Service and his father was Chancellor of Oxford University. So we were able to establish a nice circle of friends in England, too.

No wonder when we arrived in Vancouver that we felt as though we were in a spiritual void. It was more or less the same in California, although not quite as bad as here. Now it has changed but too late for us. That is one thing that Frank notices here as compared to Europe.

Hilde always gave me confidence and encouragement. My mother always said that I had no push and I wouldn't amount to anything, and look at your cousin "he's a lawyer". My little but ugly art teacher whacked me on the ear because when doing watercolours the colours went into each other. The professor at Orange Junior College said that I was wasting time taking creative writing. I wrote a travel story and a couple of poems, which I later tore up.

The same year, with encouragement from Hilde, I took a drawing class at the college. The teacher had been Walt Disney's best art designer and had written a book on art. I was surprised that I did quite well in the class. I owe everything to Hilde and I know it and appreciate it. Frank learnt so much from Hilde too, whether it was taking care of himself, cooking, ironing, sewing, etc. as well as art education and other subjects.

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Hilde really was ten feet tall in a most positive sense. When I met Hilde it was as if I hadn't lived prior to this point in my life. No wonder that I gave away all that I possessed. Hilde said that one never stops learning, and she was always searching for something new that would help us or the many people whose lives she touched. One experience that she had when she was living in Berlin, was that during a session of meditating in her apartment (yes, that one that remained intact after all the bombing of the Second World War). She became full of blue spiritual light and she could see for many miles around her, as if walls were no more there.

Another experience was during meditation, she saw a circle of avatars: Jesus, Gotama Buddha and others, and their feet were all interwoven, as belonging all together.

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In December, 1961, we decided to immigrate to Costa Rica by selling our stationery business and property in San Diego. It was a part of a much larger plan, which had started a year or so previously when a young Scottish filmmaker came into our store and told us about several interesting stories that he had covered. One of these stories was about a Major Leighton, who had devised an unusual language method whereby one could easily translate English and English into Spanish.

We went to see Major Leighton and agreed to take his language method firstly through the Central American countries as far as Costa Rica, and then after some months continue on to South America, specifically Brazil and Argentina.

We had a neighbour, who was traveling with his family to Costa Rica at the same time, as he had several pieces of property down there, and also a couple with their son, who we were going to join us in Tijuana. We had all our belongings in a large luggage trailer, which we were pulling with our Studebaker station wagon. Soon, after we had been traveling a couple of hundred miles, we lost the other two families. So now Hilde, our son Frank and myself were completely on our own, and with very limited knowledge of the Spanish language.

We managed better than we first thought, and it is surprising how well one can relate to others by showing that we wanted to understand them and also using our limited knowledge accompanied with signs or actions

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I think of one particularly amusing episode in her life was when we were traveling in Mexico. We were in a small village, and when we stopped our station wagon and trailer quite a crowd gathered around us. Forty years ago some of the remote villages often hadn't seen tourists with foreign license plates.

We wanted to buy some eggs, and Hilde insisted in going into a store to buy some while

Frank and I stayed in the car. Hilde tried her Spanish, but like so many speaking a foreign language, it isn't quite the same as the natives would speak. In her frustration she acted the part by giving the impression of a hen laying an egg. The people all laughed and Hilde got her eggs.

She was liked everywhere that we traveled in Mexico and Central America. On our return journey to the U.S.A. when we stopped at some of the same towns, there was always someone who would come up to Hilde and say "Ilda" and often would hug her. They couldn't understand how she was so different to the other Americans. The fact which helped her was that she would never be afraid to speak with her limited knowledge of Spanish, whereas others wouldn't even try expecting the Mexicans to speak English. They said to Hilde "Aleman"(German). They liked the Germans, and were glad we were not Americans.

It was the fact that we were Canadians that probably saved our lives on this trip too. We were in Honduras, almost out of gasoline, when we stopped at a small town to get a travelers cheque cashed at a bank. Even though I was in worn old clothes and probably looked dirty, as we had just lived in our station wagon for days, we still looked different and white.

I left Hilde and Frank in a store a couple of blocks away from the bank, which was on a street of old houses. As I came out of the bank, two men grabbed me and forced me with them across the road to where four others were standing. They wanted me to hand over the money. They were dark brown, one man being black. Knowing my plight and that Hilde and Frank wouldn't survive if they killed me, I tried first Spanish which they understood only too well. Nothing was any help. Then I said that I was from Canada. I tried my very poor French, and luck would have it, one of the men had worked on the docks in Montreal. I played on this and was able to convince him that we just needed the money for gasoline and were not rich American tourists. So they let me go.

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Except visiting ruins there wasn't anything worth mentioning until we reached the state of Oaxaca. When we began to descend the high mountains to the valley of Oaxaca, we felt that there was something familiar about the area. Hilde and I both sensed this strongly. We both sensed that we had spent two lives previously in and around Oaxaca. The first one was unpleasant being in an area of combat at Monte Alban, and coming down the hill from there we nearly all three got killed. It was a narrow road and a truck came towards us from around a bend. This time Hilde's deceased aunt warned Hilde just in time, and we pulled as far over onto the verge of grass (I am wrong as it was going up the hill).

After a few days when we left Oaxaca on our way towards Pueblo and Mexico City, as we traveled about ten miles, Hilde again had a strange voice and was most insistent that we stop at what looked like a church or monastery. She got so persistent, as she knew we wanted to make some progress before it got dark. But we just had to stop. It was here that the most sensational things happened to her.

It was a monastery and as we entered Hilde knew exactly where she wanted to go. She

turned to the right inside the large door of the entrance, and was perplexed, as she couldn't find what she was looking for.

The custodian of what was now a museum told us that there used to be a nunnery adjoining the building several centuries ago. Then we went to the front of the monastery and there was the head of a priest or monk in a glass case. It was 100% the likeness of Dr. W.B. Crow. Hilde said that she had made the head after the priest had past away,

How Hilde happened to be in charge of the nunnery, was that she and I and a group of people had left some place a distance away (probably because of a disaster as refugees). All the rest of the people, including myself carried on, leaving Hilde at the monastery. She must have known that she was destined to go in there.

So this area around Oaxaca had a special significance for both of us, but more particularly for Hilde.

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We traveled on through Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua until we reached Costa Rica. Our one big problem was that we all three suffered twice from severe attacks of dysentery. I was confined to bed for a whole week in Guatemala City.

At first Costa Rica seemed as though it could work out, except that the customs wanted to tax us quite heavily on our station wagon, as only farm vehicles were exempt from tax. Our other problem was that the bank wouldn't accept our certified Manhattan bank cheque, which left us with only funds for a couple of days. They said it would take at least a week to clear the cheque. We found out that there was a man who had emigrated from Germany many years ago who might be able to help us. We were lucky, as he and his dear wife invited us every evening for a whole week to dinner. After that we went into a cheap hotel and tried to get our bearings

About another week later, in San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica, Hilda somehow was overtaken by a trancelike condition and had a strange voice in which she said she wanted to get back to Alice (Alice was her best friend in San Diego). Within months tons of ashes were dumped on San Jose by the nearby volcano causing great suffering.

It was at this time that Hilde recalled another incarnation in which she was with me picking berries, it was a very vivid "recallation" as she could hear the hooves of horses and also her father didn't approve of our relationship, as he didn't in this life. She died after eating the berries. She felt that this was in Southern Spain and before the one in Mexico.

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During our journey we had had no success with introducing the language invention. Firstly, in each country the education ministries showed no interest in it and we always had to wait days for an appointment.

El Salvador and Guatemala presented no problems until we reached the Mexican border at their end of the long Tap Chula bridge. The Guatemalans wanted a large amount of money from us. I had bribed the one officer with a bible, but that didn't work. We paid them some money and crossed the bridge. As we reached the other side four Guatemalan soldiers crossed the bridge and demanded that the Mexicans send us back because our papers were not in order. Fortunately, the Mexicans had no time for the Guatemalans, and quickly sent them back. The Mexicans were so good to us, and proved helpful in getting us on our way.

We hadn't traveled the Pan American Highway on our way back through Guatemala, as on our way through the country before, we had to travel over a large stretch of rocky road, and our vehicle and trailer had turned over, and so we didn't want to go through that experience again. But going this route we had to put the vehicle and trailer on a train at Tap Chula to Arriaga. as there was no road. At Arriaga the road then joined the main road and from there we drove on to Oaxaca. We felt quite at home in Oaxaca, people in the plaza recognized Hilde.

We met interesting people, the woman who organized the Plumed Dancers, the museum and the ruins at Mitla, which brought recitations for Hilde.

Apart from visiting various archaeological sites around Mexico City the journey back to San Diego was fairly uneventful.

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Olga Bark was one of those truly remarkable people who made a lasting impression on all who were fortunate to meet her. A colleague of mine encountered her in a bookstore. She, an elderly lady, and he, a young man in his first job as a salesman. Brian went once a week to visit Olga, to do her errands and fix things if necessary. One day Brian mentioned her to me before he was leaving on a month's vacation. He asked me if I would mind going to see Olga while he was away.

So I went there and decided to take my Hilde with me on these weekly visits. We were quite surprised to find Olga living in a small cottage right on a lake. She had a living room, a very small bedroom and tiny kitchen and bathroom. What impressed us was the sanctuary which she had in one corner of the living room, consisting of a prayer table with candles and other items around it.

She told us that she served the Master Jesus and her immediate master was St. John. She asked us if we would pray with her. We were not orthodox Christians, and we believed that there were many ways to God. We had looked into so many religions and creeds and had come to realise that the real god was within and that from within we could pray to the one true God.

However, we did pray with Olga and continued to do so each time. One day when we left

there something different happened. A large entity accompanied us on our way home. As we passed a church the entity left us and went out into the church and then rejoined us as we were driving along.

At home this powerful being stayed with us for two days, and affected our lives, especially Hilde. Hilde started having spiritual visions and I started doing spiritual writing. This continued for almost six years. Then suddenly the visions and writing stopped.

We received a phone call to tell us that Olga had passed away peacefully in her sleep.

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I have a friend who is a complete loner. He prefers his own company. He is a good astrologer. He is also the only son of an East Indian father and Chinese mother, and has eight sisters. The custom is that when the father dies the son takes care of the mother.

My friend never married and was totally devoted to his mother's well being. He never phones me, although we have invited him to our place many times over the past 28 years that we have known him. I can phone him any time and he will, or rather we will, discuss politics and the environment. He knows all about the root races, the karma of the world and so on. There is never a dull moment in our conversations.

Another friend, with whom we had many years of closeness, has disappeared completely from our lives. He is no longer in Vancouver. He is an excellent astrologer, too. He is, presuming that he is alive, the most knowledgeable person that I have ever met with such a knowledge of Nostradamus. It was he who told me about my life as the Inca! It happened late one night, about two a.m. I think. Suddenly his eyes almost doubled and he said, "You were the Inca". It was one of only a few occurrences involving me. Hilde was very often the centre point of spiritual experiences of others, regarding her former lives in Egypt, Spain and Mexico.

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Last night, between dreams, Taiwan came to mind. Later on waking I recalled that Hilde told me about an experience that she had in the air-raid shelter in Berlin during the heavy bombing. All around and outside of the shelter was burning and there was very grave danger. The woman with Hilde in the shelter said in French, which Hilde hadn't spoken for years, that the next world war would start in Formosa (now called Taiwan)!

This doesn't seem at all improbable today, as this would most likely happen if or when China decides to take Taiwan, which it considers a part of China anyway.

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We had been wanting to go to Brazil for many years, We had experienced Central America and Mexico, and so by adding three South American countries then we would have been in ten countries of the Western Hemisphere. But it was Hilde who added the personal touch once more. We had had two or three visits in Vancouver by Hilde's niece and her friend, whose relatives mostly lived in two small cities in Southern Brazil.

So in 1983 we boarded a freighter in New York and took sail on a 46 day trip to Argentina. There were ten Americans and ourselves. There was no guarantee as to where we would be stopping, as all depended on the freight to be delivered or picked up. After stopping briefly at Rio, we stopped at Santos and then a very small port, which Hilde decided was where we should get off, much to the dismay of the Americans, who wouldn't even look around the Cuban part of Miami.

To be honest we were a bit apprehensive of the thought of getting off there. No one spoke any English and our Portuguese was most inadequate. It's a difficult language to learn, and as you probably know, a foreign language is very different to what one has learnt in school. We had decided to spend a little over three months traveling about this vast country, taking buses and staying in small towns and at cheap hotels. You must realise that Hilde was about 75. Quite an ordeal at her age. But she didn't realise it, as it wasn't until she was 80 that shewas aware of her age. It reminds me of when she picked up and carried an old cast iron sewing machine from one room to another. I wasn't there at the time. But a friend said to her, "You can't carry that, Hilde." So she put it down abruptly.

Things didn't work out too badly for us, even on landing. We found that in the southern part of the country, apart from in Rio or Sao Paulo, although very few people spoke English, except maybe one person in a bank or government office, quite a number did speak German. About two hundred years ago a large number of Germans settled in Brazil, and their descendants continued speaking the language. We gradually made our way south to the two cities where Hilde's friend's relatives lived. Travel was very cheap and the small hotels and the food was out of this world, generous breakfasts with so much tropical fruit, meats, cheeses, rolls etc, that one only needed one more meal later in the day,

There were two very significant happenings that occurred in Sao Leopoldo. One was meeting an aunt of the bank manager, Karkov. We were invited to her apartment and on entering Hilde immediately remarked quite unusually that the apartment had been changed and that the ceiling had had a most decorative skylight, which was no longer. Dona Clara was absolutely amazed as she had lived in the same apartment for about 50 years and this change had been done when she first moved in.

The second notable experience was when our friend, the cousin of our longtime German friend, took us to see a native healer and spiritualist. I had been having some health problems, and she performed a ritual with Hilde's meditative cooperation. She saw that I had an Indian Chief behind me. This I am sure was true, because at a spiritual circle in England, Hilde had taken part and had made the same remark. I think I still have a photo of the former ritual.

Hilde wrote a poem about the view from our twelfth story apartment in Brazil, which I

should try to translate into English [from German], although it wouldn't be quite the same. It was a panorama, never seen anything like this before.

In one trance, Hilde saw a whole number of Frank's incarnations, which we never told him.

Among the many incarnations of Dr. Crow was the one of Merlin the magician, of the King Arthur legend, which was not a legend but a happening.

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It wasn't always involving premonitions that saved our lives. On one occasion in Buenos Aires Hilde was walking with another man and myself, looking in the shops, when we lost contact with the rest of the tourists from the boat. We were all supposed to be going for a special dinner. We were lost, but somehow found our way back to the boat, and they made us a meal there. When the others came back to the boat, the boat was loading with cargo. As the passengers were climbing up the gangway one of the containers slipped off of the crane hooks and crashed at the bottom of the gangway. It was only about three feet from the last passengers to go aboard and those two persons usually accompanied us.

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Two relatives were mainly responsible for Hilde's development in culture and in the world of fashion: her aunt, who had one of the most elegant fashion houses in Berlin, and taught her to be a first rate milliner and fashion designer; and, secondly, her grandmother, who gave her a wonderful education in the arts and music, and in spirituality too.

The grandmother had seven daughters, who they called "the seven ravens", as they all had jet-black hair, like Hilde did when I first met her. The grandfather deserted her shortly after the last child was born, and took his favorite daughter with him to New York. We were never able to trace him. She brought up the other six daughters herself, the youngest wasn't much older than Hilde and became a very good friend of hers.

It was Hilde's grandmother who influenced Hilde's deeper development. Hilde would spend every available moment with her, preferring to just eat herring and potatoes with her and to listen to her music of the classics and to be taught about the great artists. Her grandmother had one of her legs amputated during the war of 1870; there was nothing to deaden the pain in those days. She died in 1935.

Hilde was very independent from a very early age. After receiving a punishment from her mother, Hilde, only two years old ran away, taking with her some clothes. They found her some blocks away, having fallen in a large pool of water.

When Hilde was five, her grandmother got her into the Ibsen Theatre in Berlin and she had a natural talent for acting. Later she learnt the violin and then the guitar.

When we were in England, Hilde played at the Little Theatre in Leicester, and later when we were in Nicaragua, she played and sang for the hospital staff and patients. Loma Linda had a large hospital there which served the capital, Managua, and the surrounding province.

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However, Hilde's mother was special too. Hilde and her mother were always looking at the twelve-year cycles in an astrological chart. In her later years she could see right through a stranger and tell them their past and future. I witnessed this myself. She spent a number of weeks with us in England and eight months in California. Got homesick and went home to her Berlin. Hilde visited her in 1976 for seven weeks and on Hilde's arrival back in Vancouver, I had received a telegram informing us of the mother's passing only one hour before.

I believe that Hilde's mother had a vision of the White House, when she visited us in 1965 in California, and said that something destructive was going to happen there in the future. Also, on the night before the happenings on September 11, I dreamt of all the U.S. presidents. Last night I dreamt of the U.S. flag, but the flag was only with the stripes without the stars. I was very sad and went to the nearest church to pray. I was the only one. But as I came out, crowds of people flocked into the church. So I wonder what that meant.

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Although Hilde was a person of the world and felt at home everywhere, and she did feel particularly so in England, where they loved her, even arriving on the scene directly after the war, she was a "real Berliner" (a term Kennedy coined). She had that special Berlin humour. If I hadn't come on the scene, she would have become an entertainer. She had a music and voice tutor and had been provided with the necessary contacts, belonging to an elite art-music group.

Britain has comics still, but of a silly nature. I could enjoy Peter Sellers, even the risqué Benny Hill, but there isn't much now. Robin Williams and Steve Martin have some humour, except that the former made some insulting remarks about Canada. I can understand the Bavarians having their own humour, but the rest of Germany wouldn't appreciate it, especially the Berliners and Hamburgers, who don't like Bavaria particularly; a bit like the English and the Irish.

Hilde said I didn't have a sense of humour. But I would often laugh about a joke several days late. Others disagreed. Two of our mutual friends, who don't know each other, said to me, "Oh, you're so funny."

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I quite enjoy my scrabble evening each week and fortunately the other players are quite good, which makes a challenge.

Another good friend will be back from three months in England in a few days and will visit me. She has real problems, too; her 41-year-old son is hooked on heroin. A big worry for her.

I had to quit writing as I have had severe numbing of all my fingers as well as blurred vision due to prostate medication, which I am cutting out for a few days until I see a significant improvement with just the minimum of numbness, and today is slightly better.

I have always fared much worse with the watery houses 4,8 & 12, and so I feel that I will do a bit better this year and in fact it couldn't be much worse than the previous twelve months.

So now I am in the 5th, which is the house corresponding to Leo and is the house of joys, pleasures, new enterprises and undertakings. I realize that I can't expect very great things due to my age; however, I may experience a few positive changes. Maybe some friendships, which I could really use now. Writing is fine, and I can do plenty of that. But I am a person who needs communication in person, and also someone to be able to phone regularly.

I lost one dear friend who died from diabetes. He and I talked everyday about opera and classical music. He was a German and had worked at the Staatsoper in Berlin and we both had seen a number of the same singers and operas.

A couple in North Vancouver died and they were in the arts and he had been president of the Theosophical Society.

Another man died at 94, with whom I had played chess and he always beat me and he was very interested in health and travel.

So it isn't easy to find replacements.

THE TURTLE POEMS

for Hilde and Dennis Johnson

By Carolyn Zonailo

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A small slough
near the white clapboard
farmhouse (circa 1880,
named The Cedars)
is home to tadpoles, muskrats,
painted turtles, bullfrogs,
a pair of ducks
and a family of four
snapping turtles
amazing in their dimensions:
 one two-feet long
 one a foot across
 one eight inches wide
 one half-a-foot in length.
Their collective ages
must be approximately
390 years:
all the above life
in an abandoned
drainage ditch!

II

In 86 years of living
Hilde has observed human
nature, in all its varieties—
as diverse as the wildlife
abundant in our nearby
slough. She was born
a true psychic,
her grandmother also
psychic and her mother
a medium—she was a child of
Germany's two world wars:
coming to age,
she used her special
skills to work
for the German
underground,
risking her life
throughout the war
so that others
could live; went
up before the Gestapo
—all this became
more grist for her
mill, her life-long
quest for understanding
human nature.

III

At age 39 Hilde
married a second time,
a young serviceman from England,
and left Germany for Britain.
Hilde less than five
feet tall, always
beautiful (her daughter
mistaken for her sister)
now more bird-like
in her eighties
but still younger
than her age;
after the daughter
married and settled
in England, Hilde began
her travels between countries—
New Zealand, Canada, United States,
South America—
now a son
accompanied the many
moves, Hilde all the time
adding more to her knowledge
of human nature.

IV

This is what Hilde knows:
events before they happen,
one's hidden character,
the nature of love,
acceptance of people
for who they are
and who they could
become; not just
the good or sugar-coated
self, but the true self
in all complexity.
She has studied
the health of the whole
person: inner and outer,
body and character,
physical and psychic
well-being. This,
and the central
romance of her life,
49 years later
both still in love
and happy to be together.

V

At one time
Hilde made hats
for other women;
creative with her needlework,
she opened a millinery store;
she still sews
jackets and clothes
for herself, too diminutive
to fit store-bought clothes.
When you take her shopping
she looks at how
every item is made,
then goes home
and fashions her own
garments: white for summer,
shoes with velcro straps.

VI

What do the turtles know?
The seasons of ice
and spring thaws,
climbing upon a stone
to sun themselves
in the early morning,
sliding into water
to hide when we walk by.
The year the plows came
and filled in half
the ditch, water dry
now at mid-summer.
Sometimes a painted
turtle in the middle
of the road, a slow
passage toward
the other side
or crushed
by oncoming cars.
Then we stop
and carry it across
the dangerous highway,
its underside
a bright orange and black
and yellow pattern.

VII

In the map of stars
and planets
one person can create
a single life
or touch many lives
with what they know
being shared
with others—this
much is certain:
as the slough contains
such different varieties
of creature,
so one life contains
more than a single thread
of consciousness,
dispersing the self
in love and generosity
to all those they meet;
and when they are no longer
near to counsel us,
the turn of phrase
that contains
the truth
remains a part
of who we have become.
This is what Hilde
has written in a letter:
*The quality of a person's
relationship to others
is an important yardstick
in measuring
the success of one's life.*

“The Turtle Poems” were first published in *Wading the Trout River*,
by Carolyn Zonailo, Empyrean Press, Montreal, 1997

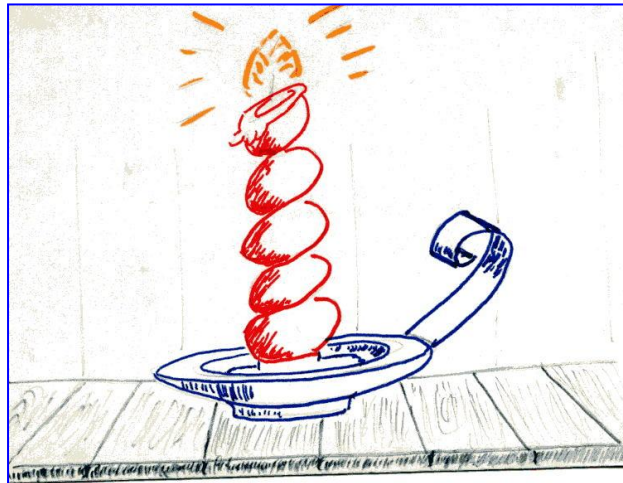
Born in England, **DENNIS JOHNSON**, served in the British army in the mid-1940s. An accomplished astrologer, he spent several years studying with Dr. W.B. Crow. Dennis's life was transformed by meeting and then spending the next fifty years married to Hilde Johnson.

STEPHEN MORRISSEY is a poet who was born in Montreal. He is married to Carolyn Zonailo and became friends with Hilde and Dennis through her. For more information go to www.stephenmorrisey.ca

CAROLYN ZONAILO is a Vancouver-born poet who knew Hilde and Dennis Johnson for thirty years. Her recent book, ***The Holy Hours***, was published by Morgaine House, Pointe Claire, Quebec in 2004. Visit the poet at www.carolynzonailo.com

REMEMBERING HILDE, by Dennis Johnson, is a memoir of his wife, Hilde Johnson. Johnson describes various profound events experienced with his wife during fifty years of living with this extraordinary woman. Some of these experiences are psychic, others spiritual, and all celebrate a deeper perception of life. Included are Carolyn Zonailo's evocative "The Turtle Poems", a series of poems dedicated to the Johnsons, and Stephen Morrissey's Preface to this memoir.

The text of *Remembering Hilde* is made up of letters written by Dennis Johnson to Carolyn Zonailo and Stephen Morrissey. After Dennis's death Morrissey edited the letters to create this chapbook. It is an important document in the history of the spiritual journey in the second half of the Twentieth Century.



Drawing by Hilde Johnson



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